

CIRCLE CONVERSATIONS

Fostering Connections was founded by Lacy Nickelson and her husband Tom in 2017. After feeling called to become a Police Protective Custody care family, they experienced firsthand the challenges these families, as well as other foster and adoptive families, were facing. Foster families take on many responsibilities for the children they care for, including doctor appointments, therapy appointments, tantrums, drug use, and the work it takes to blend them in with their own children. It can be financially, mentally, and emotionally exhausting for foster families. Lacy realized that there were not enough resources and training being offered to support these families. She felt a calling in her heart to do something for foster families in Southeast Kansas. Lacy wanted to show God's love by uniting together with local community members and churches to support foster families.

When asked what some of the biggest challenges she faces at Fostering Connections are, Lacy said that she often hears, "The system is so broken, why in the world would I even try to help?" Her answer to this statement is that it is not the child's fault that the system has flaws. Everyone can show love to these children and help them feel special one life at a time.

[continues on back]

Coming Up

- **August:** Annual membership drive! Keep an eye on your mailbox for a reminder.
- **September:** Grant applications open + recruitment event (date & location TBD)
- **October:** New *Circle Conversations* and 2024 grant review meetings
- **November:** CFSEK Grant Celebration
- **December 3:** CFSEK Match Day 2024



Lifelong connections

Fostering Connections hosts a variety of programs for foster parents and kids throughout the year.



Fostering Connections (cont.)



Fostering Connections works with the local child-placement agencies in the counties that they serve. They do not receive any state funding and rely on the support and donations of community members, business partnerships, and churches. They have over a dozen programs and events that they are providing to foster families.

The Rita J. Bicknell Women's Health Fund at CFSEK has funded several grants to Fostering Connections over the past several years. One grant that particularly stands out to Lacy was awarded in 2022 to support their Teen Girl Shopping Spree Program. This grant kicked off and fully funded their Teen Gift Card Program for a year. The program provides teen girls that have just entered into care with a \$100 gift card to a local apparel store to purchase a new outfit. This helps build the teen's confidence as they walk into a new school or environment. When a child is removed from their home and taken into care, they are not always able to take many of their belongings. Fostering Connections took this as a small way to help empower teen girls. They believe in the potential of every teen girl to become a healthy and contributing adult.

The Rita J. Bicknell Women's Health Fund is proud to support the essential programs that Fostering Connections is providing in Southeast Kansas. Lacy, Tom, and everyone at Fostering Connections have created an amazing resource for the community, and we are proud of their work!

Cherona Bicknell

Reminder: annual contributions due Sep. 30

Membership contributions for the Women's Giving Circle (\$2,000) and Circle of Friends (\$250) are due by September 30, 2024. Pay by check or at SoutheastKansas.org/join-whf.

Congrats, Sherri!

The Community Foundation's long-time Program Coordinator **Sherri Stephens is retiring at the end of July**. She's been instrumental in helping the Women's Health Fund grant and grow for the last 9 years! We're going to miss her, but we wish her a long and happy retirement! Congratulations, Sherri!

Bonus article online

CFSEK's new Program Coordinator Kara Mishmash wrote in the Foundation's recent newsletter about **our May Coffee & Conversations event**.

[Click Here to Join](#)

(or renew)

or scan with your smartphone:



The Rita J. Bicknell Women's Health Fund is a part of the **Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas**

100 S. Broadway St., Ste. 100 • P.O. Box 1448
Pittsburg, KS 66762 • (620) 231-8897

SoutheastKansas.org